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Source: *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (MARCH 1968), pp. 71-87
Published by: Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/20832905
Accessed: 29-10-2015 18:22 UTC

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A CRITICAL STUDY OF IQBAL'S VIEWS ON THE ANTI-CLASSICISM OF THE QUR'ĀN

MAZHERUDDIN SIDDIQI

In his fifth lecture in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal starts with emphasizing the difference between the prophetic and mystic types of consciousness, and says that the Prophet's return from the depths of his religious experience is creative. He returns to insert himself into the sweep of time with a view to control the forces of history.[1] Iqbal then goes on to stress the concept of the finality of prophethood in Islam. "During the minority of mankind," Iqbal declares, "psychic energy develops what I call prophetic consciousness, a mode of economizing individual thought and choice by providing ready made judgements, choices, and ways of action. With the birth of reason and critical faculty, however, life, in its own interest, inhibits the formation and growth of non-rational modes of consciousness. Inductive reason, which alone makes man master of his environment, is an achievement; and when once born it must be reinforced by inhibiting the growth of other modes of knowledge."[2] The birth of Islam was, according to Iqbal, the birth of inductive intellect. Having reached its perfection in Islam, prophecy discovered the need of its abolition. This is the meaning of the concept of the finality of prophethood in Islam.

After abolishing prophecy and non-rational modes of consciousness, the Qur'ān, adds Iqbal, directed man's attention to three sources of knowledge which could enable him to master his fate. Nature, History and inner experience are the three sources of knowledge open to man, but it is in tapping the first two sources of knowledge, says Iqbal, that the spirit of Islam is seen at its best.[3] The Qur'ān sees signs of the ultimate reality in the 'sun,' the 'moon'.....in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense perception of man. This appeal to the concrete combined with the slow realization that according to the teachings of the Qur'ān, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite and capable of increase brought Muslim thinkers into conflict with Greek thought which, in the beginning of their career, they had studied with so much enthusiasm. Not realizing that the spirit of the Qur'ān is essentially anti-classical and putting full confidence in Greek thinkers, their first impulse was to understand the Qur'ān in the light of Greek

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philosophy. In view of the concrete spirit of the Qur'ān, and the speculative nature of Greek philosophy which enjoyed theory and was neglectful of fact, this attempt was foredoomed to failure. And it is what follows their failure that brings out the real spirit of the culture of Islam and lays the foundation of modern culture in some of its most important aspects.[4] To make his point clearer, Iqbal claims that for purposes of knowledge, the spirit of Muslim culture fixes its gaze on the concrete, the finite, and that the birth of the method of observation and experiment in Islam was due not to a compromise with Greek thought but to prolonged intellectual warfare with it.[5]

In order to better appreciate the remarks made by Iqbal with regard to the revolutionary changes effected by Islam in man's life and his intellectual world view, it would be necessary to take stock of the world as it existed before Islam and the religious and intellectual forces that went into its making. Let us begin with the Greeks on whom Iqbal is so severe.

Ancient Philosophy and Religion

Greek philosophy developed to a very large extent in independence of the general, social, political and religious life of the Greeks. On the whole, its effect was to create a tendency towards individualism and incline men to seek their salvation outside the life of the community. Its temperament was largely aristocratic. Before the rise of Greek philosophy, the religion of the Greeks was civic and political. Philosophic enlightenment brought about a decay in the old cults of Apollo, Zeus and Athene. Those who were touched by the philosophic spirit were soon disillusioned by the myths which held together the common people. The Sophists saw in the legal prescriptions of the state nothing but a body of customs and conventions established by human agreement. The natural appeared to be of greater worth, more nearly permanent and binding than the social. Natural law seemed higher than historic positive law.[6] Ever since then, Nature, in some form or other, set the moral standard for the Greeks, and positive law and religion were largely abhorrent to them. Even a Jew, like St. Paul, came under the influence of the Greek ethical conceptions which almost deified Nature. For example, when he spoke of the 'vile affections' which were against nature (Para Physin) he was still within the Jewish religious outlook. But when he emphasized the value of 'uncircumcision which is by nature' (ek physeos), he talked to the Greco-Roman gentiles in their language and

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not in that of the Jews. His argument recalls the insistence of Antiochus, reported by the equally Hellenistic Jewish author of IV Maccabees, that Eleazer ate swine's flesh, 'for most excellent is the meat of this animal which Nature has graciously bestowed upon us and why should you abominate it'.[7]

The apotheosis of nature by the Greeks culminated in the identification of reason and nature by the Stoics, who avoided, however, the sharpened Cynic antithesis between civilization and nature. They rather referred what is contrary to nature to the preponderance of the individual impulse and characterised the natural as reason dwelling in each and all alike. The latter thought led to the conventional religious principle of subjection to world-reason.

Search for a new Ethics

The attempt to find ethical standards in nature failed firstly because nature itself sets no standards, but largely because ethical standards can not stand by themselves without the support of religion and religious metaphysics.

Ancient philosophy did not pass beyond a eudaemonistic conception of ethics.[8] Happiness remained the supreme goal of all ethical endeavour. Socrates believes that right action is a means for the attainment of happiness. In other words, ethics is justified because it leads to non-ethical satisfaction. Democritus held the principle that violent and stormy emotions disturb the equilibrium of the soul, *i.e.* disturb the fire-atoms. Such motions bring with them a state of agitation of the senses. Therefore, in spite of their apparently momentary pleasure, they lead in reality to lasting dissatisfaction. Fine and gentle motions of thought have, on the contrary, true pleasure in themselves.

The search for individual happiness and satisfaction was bound to result in the disregard for civic and social virtues. Alike, therefore, in the Cynic, Cyrenaic and Stoic philosophies, we find a studied indifference to social and communal well-being. "Most dubious of all this was the shamelessness of which the Cynics were guilty, and their intentional disregard of all the conventions of sexual relations; similar too was their indifference to the family life and to the state.....the fundamental purpose of Cynicism in all these determinations is to make man entirely independent".[9] Again, the isolation of the individual shows itself in the hedonistic philosophers in their indifference to public life. Aristippus rejoiced that in his sophistic wanderings no interest in politics

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infringed upon his personal freedom..... These are all sentiments in which the Cynics and Cyraenaics agree almost verbally and in these the decline of Greek civilization was most characteristically expressed.[10]

Effect on Religion

When individual happiness was set up as the final goal of ethical endeavour and the ideal of public or communal well-being receded into the background, religion was more and more interiorized. The decay of the ancient cults of Apollo, Zeus, and Athene in the Greek world paved the way for the outburst of an intensely personal religion. "A living and personal religious sense was in all probability more diffused throughout the Greek world under the Epigoni and Roman Empire than it had been in the earlier centuries. Contact with the oriental spirit brought to many a stronger intensity in religious life; religion is no longer preoccupied with the physical and political world, its horizon lies beyond the grave and its force is other-worldliness. Men flock to the mysteries seeking communion with the divinity by sacrament and sustaining their faith by mystical dogmas".[11]

Neo-pythagoreanism initiated the mystic direction of thought in the ancient world and thereby dealt a heavy blow to all scientific tendencies. Mystic experience is always based on personal intuition and must, of necessity set aside reason which is more closely connected with social experience. The saints of Neo-pythagoreanism were divinely favoured men blessed with an immediate and intuitive grasp of the intelligible. Daemonology was the theoretic basis for the peculiar amalgamation of this monotheism with the Mysteries. It rested upon the need of bridging the chasm between God's transcendence and the world.[12]

Neo-pythagoreanism had very little to do with the original Pythagorean philosophy, but more with the religious spirit of the Pythagorean mysteries. But Neo-pythagoreanism shares this with the Jewish sect of Essenes to such a degree that the origin of Essenes and their new religious conception may be sought in the contact of Judaism with the Orphic Pythagorean mysteries. The practical consequence of this contact was in Palestine the origination of the Essenes; the theoretic consequence was in Alexandria the philosophy of Philo.[13]

Philo, who was the greatest of all the Jewish philosophers of the Alexandrian school, had close affiliations with Plato, the later Pythagoreans and the Stoics. Yet with all this he remained a Jew. In the philosophy of Philo, God's transcendence is so absolute that there remains

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not the least possibility of His having any connection with the material world. In this way Philo gives a new form to the Platonic world of Ideas which stand in absolute independence of the world of matter. To predicate any quality of God would be, for Philo, to reduce Him to the sphere of finite existence. Of Him we can only say that He is not *what* He is and such negative predications as to His being appear to Philo, as to the later Pythagoreans and the Neo-Platonists, the only way of securing His absolute elevation over the world.

A consistent application of Philo's abstract conception of God would exclude the possibility of any active relation of God to the world. To overcome this difficulty, Philo holds that since God cannot enter into direct relations with the impure and evil matter which in contrast to him is passive, potencies go out from Him with which He forms and directs the world. These (Stoical) Potencies were identified on the one hand with the Platonic Ideas, and, on the other, with the angels of the Jewish religion. Their unity, however, is the Logos, the second God, the content, on one hand, of all original ideas and, on the other, of the teleological formative forces that reveal God's presence in the world.[14]

The same problem of Divine transcendence and the necessity of connecting God and the world which gave birth to the Alexandrian Jewish philosophy of Philo also produced the Neo-Platonist theory of emanation. There were other causes too at work. "In the development of ancient thought the individualization and the contemplativeness of the spiritual life kept equal pace, and created finally the burning desire to conceive the divine essence immediately and wholly with the innermost activity of the soul,—to unite oneself entirely and undividedly with that essence. But the more that confidence in the ancient forms of mythical representation vanished, the farther off, the more unknown, and the more incomprehensible appeared the divine essence."[15]

Neo-Platonism

The problem was solved by Plotinus by means of an emanation theory. The system has been briefly set out by a writer in the following passage.[16]

"The primeval being is, as opposed to the many, the one; as opposed to the finite, the Infinite, the unlimited.... But one cannot attach moral attributes to the original being, because these would imply limitation. It has no attributes of any kind; it is being without magnitude, without life, without thought; in strict propriety, indeed, we ought not

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to speak of it as existing; it is "above existence", "above goodness". It is also an active force without subtraction; as active force the primeval Being is perpetually producing something else, without alteration or motion or diminution of itself. The production is not a physical process, but an emission of force; and since the product has real existence only by virtue of the original existence working in it, Neo-Platonism may be described as a species of dynamic pantheism.

"The original being first of all throws out the Nous, which is the perfect image of the One and the archetype of all existing things. It is at once being and thought, ideal world and idea. As image, the Nous perfectly akin to the One, but as derived from it, it is entirely different. The image and product of the motionless *nous* is the soul, which according to Plotinus is, like the *nous*, immaterial. Its relation to the *nous* is the same as that of the *nous* to the One. It stands between the *nous* and the phenomenal world, is permeated and illuminated by the former, but is also in contact with the latter. The *nous* is indivisible; the soul may preserve its unity, and remains in the *nous*, but at the same time it has the power of uniting with the corporeal world and thus being disintegrated. It therefore occupies an intermediate position."

Plotinus explains the existence of matter on the analogy of light gradually fading away into darkness. The streaming out of the divine essence degenerates finally in matter, and just as the gleaming light is lost in the darkness, souls are supposed to create matter out of themselves and enter into it as formative powers. The world of sense phenomena too has an eternal existence, like that of the soul. In a circular process of development it unrolls the archetype of Ideas. Therefore the conception of nature in Plotinus is not only teleological, it is downright magical. Every event is an activity of the soul: the pure world soul creates gods, star-spirits and demons out of itself.

As far as his ethical doctrine is concerned, Plotinus shared with the Cynics and the Cyrenaics, their aversion from social and political life. Like them, he set up independence of the world as the goal of ethical endeavour. Conduct was of little value to him since it bound the soul to the material world. Social and political integrity is only a preparation by which the soul learns how to become free from the power of sense. Therefore the teaching of Plotinus was without significance for political life.

True spirituality had little to do with social or political conduct. It consisted rather in the attempt of the soul to reach back to the *nous* from which it came. Pure sense-perception is of little help to the soul for

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this return. The most potent incentive is found in the love for the beautiful which diverts the soul from sense-impressions and turns it to the illuminating Idea. He who has an immediate recognition of the pure Idea is travelling to a higher perfection. But true blessedness is attained only in an ecstasy, when man is able to transcend thought and attain complete contact and union with God, forgetting both himself and the objective world. "Plotinus regarded this highest holiness as a grace which comes only to a few, and to these but seldom. He granted that the culture of positive religion is a help to the attainment of this ecstatic condition, although in other respects he opposed positive religion."[17]

Neo-Platonism is in one aspect the consummation, in another the collapse of the ancient philosophy. Never before in Greek or Roman speculation had the consciousness of man's dignity and superiority to nature found such adequate expression; never before had real science and pure knowledge been so undervalued and despised by the leaders of culture as they were by the Neo-Platonists.[18]

Gnosticism

We have seen that the central problem both of Philo's doctrine of the Logos and that of Neo-Platonism was to find some method by means of which a relation could be established between a transcendent God and the material universe. Philo solved this problem by positing an intermediary between God and the world who dwells with God as His eldest son. He is also the Idea of Ideas, the whole mind of God going out of itself in creation. Plotinus solved the same problem through the mediation of *Nous* which, in one of its aspects, is in contact with the world-soul. The world-soul has two potencies and its lower part creates the body of the world and enters into it.

Both these doctrines presuppose, in some form or other, that matter is inherently evil and, therefore, God could not have direct contact with it. This was a very ancient idea which seems to have come down from Plato. In Plato's philosophy the world of matter and sense-experience was unreal and deceptive. Reality belonged to the world of ideas only. Aristotle mitigated this sharp dualism but he too regarded matter as the cause of the imperfect and the accidental.

Like Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism was yet another attempt to explain how God, the Perfect Being, could create the world of matter and enter into relationship with matter which was the very principle of evil.

In keeping with the aristocratic tendency of all mystery-religions,

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Gnosticism anticipated redemption for only a limited number of chosen spirits. It consisted not so much in the profession of certain opinions as in the practice of certain rites which were supposed to aid the soul in its effort to shake off its fetters.

At the head of the Gnostic system stands a supreme God who is not so much a personal deity as the abstract ground of all existence. From the supreme God, there spring forth a number of beings in a descending scale of dignity who are arranged in pairs of male and female and in their totality make up the Pleroma—the fullness of blessedness and perfection.

In later Gnosticism, the members of the Pleroma bear the name of Aeons and are created in successive pairs by a process of emanation.

The process of redemption becomes necessary through the fall from the Pleroma of the member that stands lowest in rank. To this Aeon or power is assigned the name of *Sophia.*

The fall of Sophia breaks up the perfect harmony of the Pleroma and this cannot be restored until the lost light is recovered from the darkness. An Aeon of supreme rank—the Soter or Christus – undertakes the work of deliverance.[19]

A singular feature of Gnosticism is the identification of the inferior God (Demiourgos) with the God of the Old Testament. This was probably an attempt to solve the riddle which perplexed the early Christians, who from the beginning were compelled to deny the validity of the Law, while acknowledging its claim to divine origin. The God of the Old Testament was regarded as different from the God revealed by Jesus Christ and in some sense hostile to Him.

Manichaeism

Mani seems to have been confronted with the same problem that of explaining how the perfect Being could create and direct a world composed of matter which was the principle of evil. His solution was, according to Shahrastānī,[20] that the material universe is composed of two principles both of which are eternal. One of them is Light, the other Darkness. The two present a total antithesis to each other in every respect. The followers of Mani, adds Shahrastānī, differ as to the cause of their mixture and as to the way in which they got mixed up. Some of them believed that their mixture was purely accidental, while others hold that Darkness, the evil principle, which was the more aggressive of the two, defiled light by getting itself mixed with it, with the object of causing it to become impure. In any case, five elements of darkness got themselves mixed

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with five elements of light, whereupon the king of light commanded one of his angels to construct the material universe so that the five light elements could be extricated from the five elements of darkness.

In the opinion of Iqbal,[21] Mani was the first to venture the suggestion that the universe is due to the activity of the Devil, and hence essentially evil—"a proposition which seems to me to be the only logical justification of a system which preaches renunciation as the guiding principle of life."

The Ethics and Metaphysics of the Qur'ān

We have examined the main features of classical religion and ethics and find that the ancient world was obsessed by the dualism of God and Matter, Body and Spirit, and in order to bridge this gulf, it had to create some intermediary being such as the Logos, the *Nous* and the Aeons. The distance between God and the World, Spirit and Matter was bridged over through this mediatory process.

The fall of man and his separation from God made it necessary that some means should be suggested whereby man could return to God and regain his lost dignity. From this came the idea of redemption and that of a redeemer with a whole mythology built round his person, as happened in the case of Christianity. The original Jewish idea of a Messiah was that of a ruler who would put an end to the Roman tyranny. "The Roman Empire "dreadful and strong exceedingly" was now to be succeeded by an everlasting dominion, established by "one like unto a son of man" (Ke bar enash) "to whom God would give dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and languages should serve him."[22] Christianity changed this concept of a temporal Messiah into a Messiah who had a purely spiritual mission. By means of a rich mythology borrowed, in part, from mystery religions, Jesus was deified.

The doctrine of original sin is very prominent in Christianity with its sharpened anti-thesis of flesh and spirit. Although Christianity did not regard the world as wholly evil, nevertheless it did encourage the attitude of renunciation. Manichaeism went a step further and taught that the world was wholly evil, and that renunciation was the proper goal of life. The Gnostics similarly believed that the world was created by the devil. Neo-Platonism disparaged sense—perception and everything connected therewith. Its recipe for redemption was mystic contemplation leading to ecstasy. In the Greek world, as we have shown, there prevailed a refined hedonism which taught the individual to find

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his happiness in isolation from the independence of his fellow-beings. The various mystery religions prevailing in the ancient world pushed man towards contemplative mysticism. Every where the bonds of social cooperation were loosening and quietism was on the increase. Side by side, the idea was growing that salvation and redemption was reserved only for a chosen few—those who could attain to ecstasy (as in Neo-Platonism) or to the highest stage of renunciation (as in Manichaeism). Even Christianity developed the doctrine of the elect. Thus religion was undermining social and spiritual democracy and thereby strengthened political tyranny and dictatorship. The forces of democracy and equality were on retreat in almost every sphere of life. The prevalence of mystic doctrine with their emphasis on intuition, ecstasy and contemplation led to the decay of the scientific spirit and the exercise of human reason.

Into this world was revealed the Qur'ān which repudiated all strains of thought implicit in classical thinking. There is not the slightest suggestion in the Qur'ān of the dualism of God and the world, spirit and matter. As Iqbal says, "There is no such thing as a profane world. All this immensity of matter constitutes a scope for the self-realization of the spirit. All is holy ground. As the Prophet so beautifully puts it: "The whole of this earth is a mosque."[23] The Qur'ān therefore, did not disparage the life of sense, since it says in clear terms : "(O man,) follow not that whereof thou hast no knowledge. Lo! the hearing and the sight and the heart—of each of these it will be asked." (XVII:36). This means that every person will be held responsible for the way he makes use of his sense-perception.

Since the Qur'ān did not accept the dualism of God and the world, flesh and spirit, the material and the spiritual, it did not set forth any theory whereby this sharp dualism could be mediated and the chasm between God and the world bridged. The Qur'ān says that man was created through a direct fiat of God. "Lo! the likeness of Jesus with Allah is as the likeness of Adam. He created him of dust, then He said unto him. Be! and he is." (III:59). There was thus no intermediate being between man and God. Similarly, God created the heavens and the earth by Himself without employing a subordinate agency. "Lo! your Lord is Allah who created the heavens and the earth in six days." (VII : 54). The Qur'ān further denies the existence of any intermediaries between God and man. "Now you have come unto Us solitary as We did create you at first, and ye have left behind you all that We bestowed upon you, and We behold not with you those your intercessors, of whom ye claimed that they possessed a share in you. Now is the bond

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between you severed, and that which you presumed has failed you." (VI : 95). Thus God and man stand in direct relation to each other with no one to intervene between them. For this very reason there is no concept of redemption or a Redeemer in Islam. Man must stand on his own legs and depend on himself. God only can support him and none else. The Qur'ān denies that any one can intercede with God in order to deliver man from his own deeds or misdeeds. "Who is he that intercedeth with Him save by His leave?" (II:253). As the Qur'ān does not accept the idea of original sin, and the Prophet says clearly that every child born into the world is born on nature (*i.e.*, free from all evil), no Redeemer is required. Man shapes his ultimate destiny by means of his own deeds. No one can help him in this process except God.

The concept of nature in the Qur'ān is very different from that of the classical world. Islam does not regard the natural as in any way holier than what is human or as capable of setting moral standards. But natural phenomena are not evil by themselves. Though constituted of matter, nature is not hostile to man or God. Ethically it is neutral. In a way the natural and the material are divinely constituted, because they are God's Creation. The Qur'ān directs its followers to observe the natural phenomena, for they are the signs or portents of God, as the Qur'ān calls them. "And of His portents, are the night and the day and the sun and the moon. Adore not the sun nor the moon but adore Allah Who created them, if it is in truth Him Whom ye worship.....And of His portents (is this): that thou seest the earth lowly, but when We send down water thereon it thrilleth and groweth." (XLI : 37 to 39). Again, the Qur'ān directs man's attention to the need of employing the senses with which God has gifted him in order to look around and observe the phenomena of nature which serve him in various ways. "And Allah brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers knowing nothing and gave you hearing and sight and hearts....Have they not seen the birds obedient in mid-air? None holdeth them save Allah. Lo! herein, verily, are the portents for a people who believe. And Allah hath given you in your houses an abode, and hath given you (also), of the hides of cattle, houses which ye find light (to carry) on the day of migration and on the day of pitching camp; and of their wool and their fur and their hair, comparison and comfort for a while. And Allah hath given you, of that which He hath created, shelter from the sun; and hath given you places of refuge in the mountains, and hath given you coats to ward off the heat from you, and coats (of armour) to save you from your foolhardiness. Thus does He perfect His favours unto you" (XVI: 78 to 81).

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Innumerable verses like these can be quoted from the Qur'ān to show that it directed men's attention to the natural phenomena and sharpened their faculty of observation. It is, of course, true that the object of Qur'ān was not to awaken the scientific spirit of man, as an end in itself but as a means of sharpening his sense of obligations to God for His favours. But whatever the object of the Qur'ān, the necessary effect of this kind of teaching was that man's power of observation was brought into play and the scientific spirit was roused. The Qur'ān often uses the term '*Taskhīr*' and its various forms when it refers to the natural phenomena. '*Taskhīr*' literally means conquest of something and its utilisation for one's objects and purposes. This must have awakened a feeling in the minds of the Muslim that nature is his servant, not the master and that it can be utilised for the benefit of man.

On the whole, it can be safely asserted that nowhere in the whole range of the world's religious literature do we come across a book which teaches man to make full use of his senses and utilise the energies latent in nature for his benefit. The Qur'ān did more. It encouraged literacy, it insisted on its followers to acquire more and more knowledge. The very first verses revealed to the Prophet commands him to read. "Read in the name of thy Lord Who createth, createth man from a clot. Read: And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous, Who teacheth by the pen." (XCVI: 1 to 5). The Prophet is made to pray for the increase of knowledge. "Lord! add to my knowledge." (XX : 113).

This brings us to the most important point stressed by Iqbal in his lecture referred to above that the birth of Islam was the birth of the inductive intellect. It is clear that the inductive process can start only where there is sufficient material of knowledge, for induction proceeds from the particular to the general. But if we do not have enough facts and particulars, we lack adequate basis for building general conclusions. Before Islam, thoughtful men and women did not have the necessary data available to proceed from the particular to the general. True, knowledge was pursued in the ancient world, but it was limited to a particular class of people—the priesthood—and restricted to narrow sphere. The Babylonians, the Egyptians and the Greeks had a certain amount of scientific data but the rise of speculative philosophy, growth of mystery-religions and the stress laid on intuition by religious systems such as that of Neo-Platonism dealt a heavy blow to whatever scientific spirit had been generated by the practical needs of life. Islam made the acquisition of knowledge a religious obligation. The Prophet commanded his followers to pursue knowledge even if it could be had in China and declared that

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the ink of the scholar is holier than the prayer of the ascetic. Therefore, knowledge which was confined to a special class of persons became the universal need of all citizens. Again, Islam put an end to all useless speculation about the nature and person of God and His relation to the world. The Qur'ān had given a clear and satisfying conception of God and His connection with the universe. Therefore, the Muslim felt no need to speculate on this subject. How much human energy had been wasted on such empty and useless speculations will become apparent to any one who reads the controversies of the Arians and the followers of Athanasius in Christianity. In Islam no such intellectual disputes arose except for a brief period and under external influences which soon faded away. It is a matter of the deepest significance that while scholastic and theological disputes among the Muslims petered out soon after the reign of the first four caliphs of the Abbasid dynasty (*i.e.*, by the end of Mamun's caliphate), the scientific movement in Islam continued in full vigour for many centuries. It is true that the Muslims learned a good deal from the translations of the books written by Greek scholars, but the superstructure that they built on these inadequate foundations was so imposing that all the subtleties of Muslim scholasticism and theology pale by its side into utter insignificance. Further, the scientific and inductive spirit of Islam is attested by the fact that while the 'Ulemā' (Religious scholars) of Islam adopted a neutral attitude towards Muslim science, they always viewed with suspicion the scholasticism (Kalām) built up by the Muslims under foreign influences, and some of them even laid it under a religious interdiction. Therefore, Iqbal is perfectly justified in his claim that the birth of Islam was the birth of inductive intellect, for it is only with Islam that human knowledge and command of facts increased to such an extent as to enable human thought to reach out beyond particulars to universals.

We now come to the theory of creation as set out in the Qur'ān. Before the advent of Islam creation had been explained in different ways. The Qur'ān's theory of creation is unique in that man, far from being portrayed as having been at cross-purpose with God, is shown as His agent in so far as he comes down to the earth in express fulfilment of a divine purpose. In spite of his momentary aberration, man does not fall from grace. He continues to enjoy divine favour and blessing after his descent to the earth. Let us hear what the Qur'ān has to say on the subject: "And when thy Lord said to the angels: Lo! I am about to place a viceroy in the earth, they said: wilt Thou place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood, while we, we hymn Thy praise

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and sanctify thee? He said : surely I know that which ye know not. And He taught Adam all the names, then showed them to angels saying: Inform me of these if ye are truthful. They said: Be glorified! We have no knowledge save that which Thou hast taught us. Lo! Thou, only Thou art the Knower, the Wise. He said: O Adam inform them of their names, and when he informed them of their names, He said: Did I not tell you that I know the secret of the heavens and the earth? and I know that which ye disclose, and which ye hide. And when We said unto the Angels: prostrate yourself before Adam, they fell prostrate, all save Iblis. He demurred through pride and so became a disbeliever. And We said: 'Adam'! Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden and eat ye freely (of the fruits) thereof where ye will; but come not nigh this tree lest ye become wrong-doers. But Satan caused them to deflect therefrom and expelled them from the (happy) state in which they were; and we said: Fall down, one of you a foe unto the other: there shall be for you on earth a habitation and provision for a time. Then Adam received from his Lord words (of revelation) and He relented toward him. Lo! He is the Relenting, the Merciful. We said : Go down, all of you, from hence; but verily there cometh unto you from Me a guidance and whoso followeth My guidance, there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve. But they who disbelieve and deny Our revelations, such are the rightful owners of the fire. They shall abide therein." (II : 30 to 39).

Thus, according to the Qur'ān, Adam, before his so-called fall, had already been appointed as God's viceroy on earth and, of this status, he was not deprived even after the Satan betrayed him into sin. His absolute superiority over the rest of the creation was fully established when the angels were commanded to prostrate themselves before him. What more exalted position can any creature hope to enjoy? The objection of the angels that man will indulge in destructive activities was brushed aside by God with the remark that He knew what they did not know, which shows that God had full confidence in the constructive and creative abilities of man. God did not deny that man will commit evil and do mischief, but His reply to the angels was, so to say, that the good in man will triumph over the evil in him and his constructive activity will outweigh the destructive side of his life. God seems to have presaged in these lines the triumph of the Divine in man over the Satanic in him, both from the individual and collective viewpoints. This means that the Qur'ān believes in the ultimate victory of good over evil.

The disobedience committed by Adam caused his expulsion, but the

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aberration was pardoned by God, so that Adam and Eve came down to the earth in a state of sinlessness. The Qur'ān, thus, repudiates the Jewish and Christian doctrine of original sin. God not merely provided an abode for man but also promised to help him through His revealed guidance. Of course the Qur'ān says that, man will have to wade his way through conflicts, jealousies and undesirable forms of competition but those who believe in God and His revealed word and follow the divine guidance with understanding are promised peace and happiness. In this way the story of creation handed down by the previous religions was transformed by the Qur'ān beyond recognition and new meanings were imported into it.

We now take up another feature of the classical world, namely, its intuitionism which has a bearing on the doctrine of the finality of prophethood in Islam. We have already referred to the remark of Iqbal that while the mystic does not wish to return from the repose of unitive experience, the prophet returns to insert himself into the sweep of history with a view to control its forces. Now, it is this static type of mystic consciousness which enjoys its own inner states and flees from the historic forces around it, that the classical world was developing under the influence of movements like Neo-Pythagoreanism, Neo-Platonism and mystery-religions. All these movements of the ancient world encouraged peitistic quietism, mystic contemplation and ecstasy, for the return to God could be accomplished by these methods. This highly individualistic type of religion did not need reason which it disparaged and undervalued, for reason is a social phenomenon. It takes at least two persons to reason out things. But those who lived secluded lives felt no need to reason out things with their fellow-men. Their emphasis lay on intuition, which is a highly debatable faculty, and which can serve the individual only. It is true that intuition has its place in the mental processes. But what is intuited must be made public through intelligent expression in an arguable form. Only then does it serve society. Those who sought union with God for themselves alone felt no need to make their intuition public or present it in an intelligible form which would have brought their intuition into the realm of reason and understanding. Such people lived by ignoring society altogether and he who ignores society places himself outside the historic process, which rests upon social cooperation and mutual understanding between men. But the Prophet, as Iqbal rightly remarks, returns from his unitive experience to insert himself into the sweep of history and control its forces. Now the forces of history can be controlled only by the method

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of social living and intelligent understanding of each other. Here the reasoning process must come into play, for society is a vast arena of argument and counter-argument at all levels and only those succeed in controlling the forces of history who can convince others by the argument of word and deed. Therefore, when the Prophet has succeeded in establishing a society and giving it a new direction, care must be taken to preserve those institutions and laws in which the vital values and fundamental principles of the society have been enshrined. If this is not done, the society will ultimately lose the direction on which the Prophet set it. This is impossible of accomplishment if any other authority, besides that of the prophet, is recognised as binding on men. Hence, the Prophet abolishes what Iqbal calls non-rational modes of consciousness, and sets free the reason of man. In the words of Iqbal, prophecy having reached its perfection, discovers the needs of its own abolition. All intuition, therefore, whether of the mystic or that of any other group, lacks validity in the eyes of a Muslim, unless it is publicly argued and publicly validated or, in other words, brought before the bar of reason, which is not an individual but a social phenomenon. The finality of prophethood in Islam is really the repudiation of the principle of authority in religion. Besides the authority of the prophet, no other authority can stand up and say, "this is my intuitive grasp of the problem in hand, you must accept it without further discussion." All opinion must be publicly debated and brought before the bar of reason. That which is accepted after full discussion and through criticism and counter-criticism has behind it the backing of the consensus of the community. This is the principle of Ijmā' in Islam, the most democratic principle ever discovered and applied by any community at any time in world history.

Finally, the ancient world was wrecked by the doctrine that it is only a chosen few who can hope for redemption. This doctrine was held in various forms by the followers of mystery religions, Neo-Platonism, Christianity, and Manichaeism. People were grouped together according to their spiritual attainments. There was further the institution of priesthood, the division between the clergy and the laity. All these things struck at the root of human equality and paved the way for spiritual and political tyranny. Islam made a clean sweep of all such doctrines and institutions and threw open the door to spiritual opportunity for each and all alike by abolishing the institution of priesthood and doing away with the doctrine of the elect. In the social and economic spheres, it also succeeded in restoring in a large measure the natural equality of mankind by means of institutions such as the congregational prayers

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and Zakāt (poor-tax). It thus paved the way for political democracy and in some measure even gave it concrete shape, for the rule of the first four Caliphs was largely democratic, judged even by modern standards.

NOTES

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6. W. Windle-band: *History of Ancient Philosophy*, New Dover Edition, 1956, p. 122.
7. S. W. Bason: *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Vol. II, Part II, New York, p. 81.
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21. Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal: *Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, Lahore, 1959, p. 15.
22. S. W. Bason: op. cit. Vol. II, Part II, p. 59.
23. Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal: op. cit., p. 155.

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